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ABSTRACT

Although research has shown that children tend to designate traditional sex-role areas when asked what they would like to be and that girls nominate a narrower range of vocations than do boys, more recent findings suggest that children of both sexes nominate equal numbers of vocations. Older girls, unlike boys, also choose nontraditional vocations. Sixth grade males (N=58) and females (N=63) and male (N=58) and female (N=117) college students scaled 7 career-related categories by the method of paired comparisons. The categories were classified as traditionally masculine (politics, athletics, finance, public relations) or traditionally feminine (fashion, education, health care). Subjects designated the more preferred alternative from each of the 21 possible pairs of categories. Both sexes had traditionally same-sex areas at the tops of their scales and opposite-sex categories at the bottoms; males preferred athletics most and fashion least, while females preferred health care and education most and politics least. Responses were consistent within subjects and significantly in agreement within groups. Scale values from the two male scales were significantly correlated as were those from the two female scales. (Author/NRB)

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PAIRED COMPARISONS PREFERENCE SCALES OF CAREER-RELATED CATEGORIES

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Paired Comparisons Preference Scales of Career-Related Categories

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The method of paired comparisons was used to obtain preference scales of seven, career-related categories, scaled by male and female children and adults. Many vocations have traditionally been identified with either males or females; there is evidence that children tend to designate such traditional areas when asked what they would like to be and that girls nominate a narrower range of vocations than boys do (Looft, 1971a; 1971b). However, there is some more recent evidence that children of both sexes nominate equal numbers of vocations and that older girls, unlike boys, also choose non-traditional vocations (Kriedberg, Butcher, & White, 1978). The latter findings may reflect increasing acceptance and visibility of women in traditionally male areas.

Previous investigators employed an interview format in which children were asked what they would like to be and what they thought they would be. Such a method does not enable determination of relative distances between vocational choices. Paired comparisons scaling allows the derivation of interval scales, reflecting distances between scaled items. This method has been used for scaling items such as children's incentive objects (Haaf, 1971; Haaf, Feldstein, & Witryol, 1970;

Witryol & Fischer, 1960) and incentives offered to introductory psychology students (Bebeau, Eubanks, & Sullivan, 1977).

Seven career-related categories, rather than specific vocations, were scaled in order to keep the number of comparisons manageable. Thus, scales represent attitudes toward broad areas of work which may include a number of specific occupational titles. It was expected that traditional areas would rank high within both sexes and that traditionally female categories would be at the bottom of male scales.

Subjects

The 296 subjects consisted of 58 boys and 63 girls from grade 6 (mean age = 11.23 years), comparable to the older sample of Kriedberg, et al.; 58 male and 117 female undergraduates (mean = 19.70 years), a group for which vocational choice was of more immediate relevance.

Procedure

The seven stimulus categories were classified as traditionally male (politics, finance, athletics, public relations) and female (fashion, education, health care) by adult judges. All 21 possible pairs of these terms were printed on a two-page form, arranged according to Ross' (1934) optimum orders, with each item appearing equally often in the right and left positions.

Forms were distributed and completed during regular class periods. Subjects were instructed to check the career-related category, from each pair, that they would rather do. Instructions were initially read to each class and any questions were answered; instructions also appeared on each form.

Participation was strictly voluntary and names were not requested on the response forms. After the forms were completed and collected, any further questions were answered and the subjects were thanked for their assistance.

Results

Each form contained 21 responses indicating the more preferred members of each category pair. These data were separately tabulated for each subject group and Case V scale values (Edwards, 1957) were computed. Scale values for the seven categories, obtained from sixth grade and college males and females, are shown in Figure 1. Anchor items were set at a scale value of zero but this does not indicate a true zero point (Haaf, 1971). Results of appropriate chi-square analyses (Edwards, 1957) indicated that assumptions of the Case V model were tenable for each of the four scales.

Athletics was the top category on both male scales and it was far above the second item, health care, for sixth graders; fashion was the anchor item on both scales. The highest categories among females were health care and education. Politics, a traditionally male preserve, anchored both female scales and was also quite low among males. Sixth grade boys produced the largest scale, due to the extremely high value of athletics, with the other three scales comparable to each other. The value of health care was high and comparable on three scales, all except that of college males. Finance was also relatively higher among sixth grade boys than among the other three groups while the fashion category was relatively high for both female groups.

Kendall's coefficient of consistence was performed on each subject's data and revealed that only three subjects made a sufficient number of intransitive responses to classify them as inconsistent. Perfect consistence was shown by 63% of subjects. In addition, Kendall's coefficient of agreement, and its associated chi-square significance test, were computed for each group. Each coefficient was significant beyond the .01 level, indicating greater agreement than expected if subjects within a group had responded randomly.

Scale values derived from males at both age levels were significantly correlated, $r(5) = .886$, $p < .01$, as were those derived from females, $r(5) = .92$, $p < .01$. However, scales from male and female sixth-graders were not significantly related, $r(5) = .398$, nor were those of male and female college students, $r(5) = .183$. Thus, same-sex scales correlated with one another, despite age differences but opposite-sex scales did not, despite age similarities.

Discussion

Both sexes had traditionally same-sex areas at the tops of their scales and opposite-sex categories at the bottoms. Athletics was the category most preferred by males and by quite a large margin among sixth graders. The position of athletics among college males was interesting since virtually none of them could have had any realistic expectation of such a professional career; no major athletic programs were available to them. Health care and education fell higher on male scales than did finance and politics on female scales. In fact, nontraditional areas appeared to fall somewhat higher on male

than on female scales.

An unfortunate finding was the low status of politics among all groups. At a time of declining interest in the political process, it is not encouraging to see such low value placed on this area by children and young adults.

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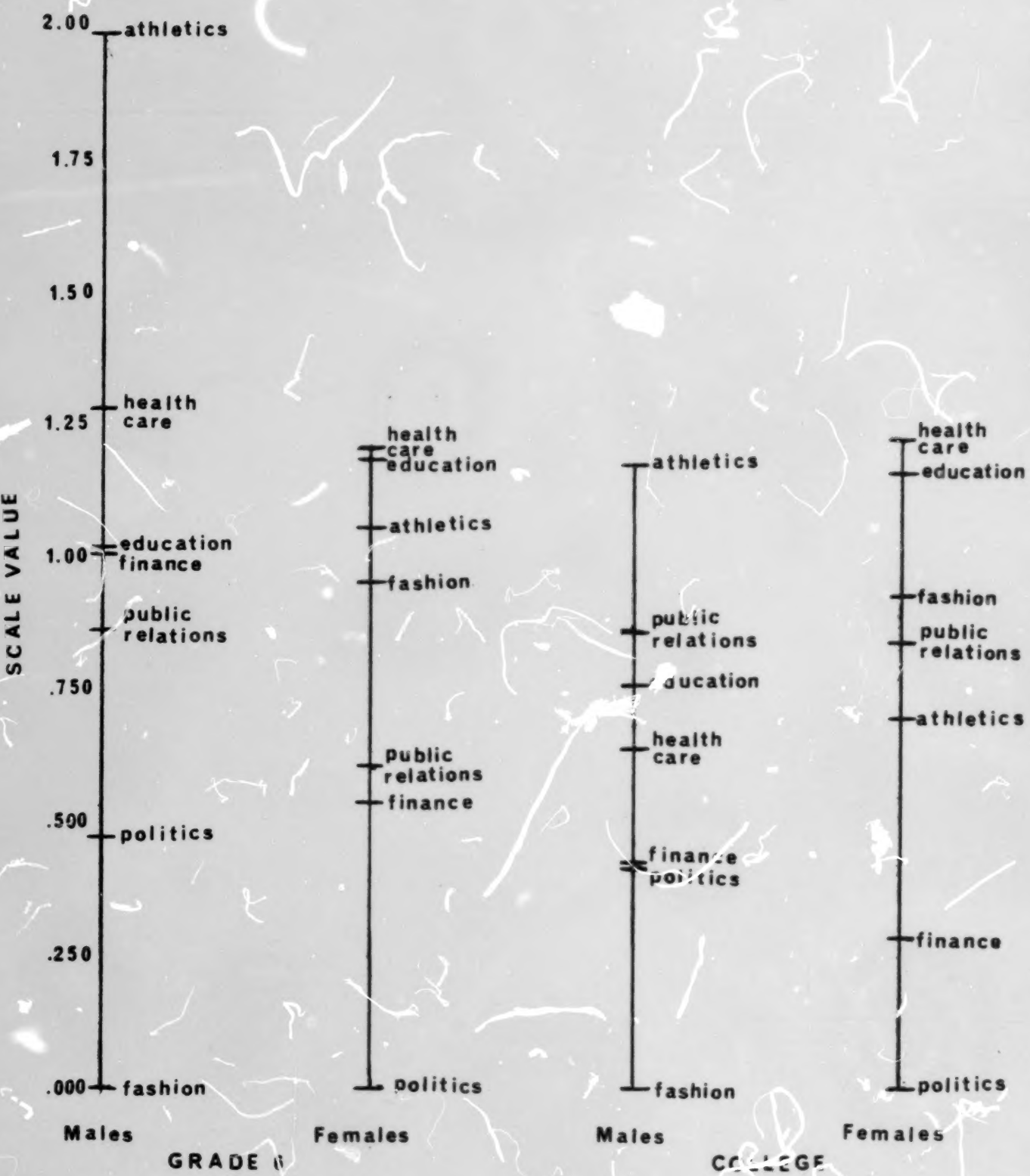
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